

Message Text

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ORIGIN MCT-01

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SIG-01 PA-01
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TO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, CY, EG

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT OF STATE COMMENT ON TERRORIST INCIDENT
IN CYPRUS

REF: NICOSIA 0475 AND PREVIOUS

1. AT FEBRUARY 21 NOON PRESS BRIEFING, DEPARTMENT
SPOKESMAN ANSWERED QUESTIONS STEMMING FROM RECENT
TERRORIST INCIDENT IN CYPRUS AS FOLLOWS:
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QUOTE: ...THE UNITED STATES STRONGLY CONDEMNS THE
TERRORIST ACTS IN CYPRUS WHICH INVOLVED THE MURDER
OF YUSUF AL-SIBAI, THE EDITOR OF THE EGYPTIAN DAILY
NEWSPAPER AL-AHRAM AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE AFRO-
ASIAN PEOPLES SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION; THE TAKING OF
HOSTAGES AND THE COMMANDEERING OF A CYPRUS AIRWAYS
AIRCRAFT.

THIS LATEST TERRORIST OUTRAGE REINFORCES THE GROWING SENTIMENT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR STRONGER MEASURES AND CLOSER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO PREVENT FUTURE INCIDENTS OF THIS KIND.

WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTS REFUSED TO ALLOW A COMMANDEERED CYPRIOT AIRCRAFT TO LAND, THUS MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE TWO TERRORISTS TO OBTAIN SANCTUARY AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR THE RETURN OF THE AIRCRAFT TO CYPRUS. END QUOTE

2. SPOKESMAN ADDED FOLLOWING REMARKS: QUOTE: THIS IS NOT A FORMAL PART OF THE STATEMENT. I WOULD SIMPLY OBSERVE HERE THAT IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT ON THE EVENTS WHICH IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED THE SURRENDER OF THE TERRORISTS AT LARNACA AIRPORT, AND THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES. I WILL SIMPLY BE UNABLE TO DO SO.

Q: BUT COULD YOU COMMENT WHETHER AT ANY POINT THE U.S. WAS TOLD, OR KNEW, OR HAD ANY INDICATION THAT THE EGYPTIAN MAY SEND, OR WOULD SEND, THIS COMMANDO PILOT TO CYPRUS?

A: I DON'T THINK THAT THE QUESTION AROSE. I DOUBT THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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I WOULD BE ABLE TO TELL YOU THAT. BUT I WILL CHECK ON IT.

Q: THEY USED THE C-130, I BELIEVE.

A: YES.

Q: DID THEY REQUEST PERMISSION FOR THE LANDING IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: GEORGE, WOULD THAT QUESTION NECESSARILY HAVE TO ARISE? I MEAN, FOR AN OPERATION LIKE THAT? I DON'T KNOW. I WILL CHECK. IT'S JUST THAT NOTHING OCCURS TO ME AS BEING NECESSARY.

Q: HODDING, DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT OF ANY KIND ON THE ATTITUDE OF THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT TO EVENTS OF THIS SORT?

A: NO, I DO NOT.

Q: HODDING, WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATION DOING TO TRY TO

ENHANCE THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO PREVENT TERRORIST ACTS?

A: AS YOU KNOW, WE WORKED VERY HARD IN THE U.N. TO ATTEMPT TO GET A STRONG STATEMENT ON TERRORIST ACTIVITY

IN THE AIR. WHILE WHAT EMERGED WAS NOT AS STRONG AS WE WOULD HAVE LIKED, WE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS AN APPRECIABLE IMPROVEMENT OVER WHAT EXISTED BEFORE.

WE HAVE ALSO BEEN WORKING THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ORGANIZATIONS -- I FORGET THE NAMES RIGHT NOW -- IN EFFORTS TO GET UNIFIED PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH, OR CURTAILING THE POSSIBILITY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TERRORISM IN THE AIR.

THE SECRETARY TESTIFIED AT SOME LENGTH BEFORE THE RIBICOFF SUBCOMMITTEE ON THIS SUBJECT, AND I DON'T REALLY HAVE ALL OF IT IN FRONT OF ME RIGHT NOW, BUT WE ARE PROCEEDING -- AND WITHIN OUR OWN HOUSE, ARE COOPERATING WITH CONGRESS, AND SPECIFICALLY WITH THE LEGISLATION BEING DRAFTED BY THE RIBICOFF SUBCOMMITTEE IN THIS FIELD--IN AN ATTEMPT TO TIGHTEN OUR OWN PROCEDURES AND TO GIVE US SOME TOOLS FOR DEALING WITH THIS PROBLEM IN THE WORLD AT LARGE.

Q: HODDING, SINCE THIS WAS THE THIRD TIME IN ABOUT 18 MONTHS THAT FOREIGN TROOPS HAVE BEEN USED IN THIS CASE-- COULD YOU SAY WHAT IS THE U.S. POLICY NOW ON THIS SORT OF ACTION?

A: NO, I DON'T HAVE A POLICY STATEMENT ON IT.

DO YOU MEAN --

Q: COMMANDO RAIDS -- DELIVERY OF HOSTAGES.

A: NO. I WOULD JUST HAVE TO SAY THAT I DO NOT HAVE A GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT. CLEARLY, THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH ONE OF THE RAIDS THAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT, I DON'T KNOW THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY OVERALL STATEMENT THAT I COULD MAKE THAT WOULD APPLY TO ALL THREE.

Q: DO YOU KNOW ON WHOSE BEHALF THESE TWO TERRORISTS WERE WORKING?

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A: NO.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?

A: NO, I DO NOT.

I HAVE SEEN SOME CONFLICTING REPORTS, AS TO WHO IT MIGHT BE.

Q: DO YOU ATTACH SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FACT THAT -- I BELIEVE -- LIBYA AND PERHAPS SOME OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH PREVIOUSLY GAVE LANDING RIGHTS TO TERRORISTS, REFUSED TO DO SO THIS TIME?

A: WELL I REPEAT: WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO FIND A SANCTUARY, AND CLEARLY THAT IS A WELCOME SIGN -- ONE WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO ENCOURAGE FOR SOME TIME. END QUOTE. VANCE

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